A Tragic Mystery.

The "Veiled Murderess" Vows That Her Name Shall Not Be Known.

She Is Believed to Be Charlotte Wood, Wife of an English Peer.

Her Son Is Now a Well-Known Member of the British Parliament.

A PRISONER FORTY-THREE YEARS.

The Story of a Life Filled with Tragedy and Sorrow—Praying for Death, Which She Believes Will Soon End Her Misery.

Is the Veiled Murderess to go down to the grave and carry with her the secret of her unrevealed identity?

Is the name Henrietta Robinson to be carved over her grave—a perpetual lie made possible by the Spartan determination of a woman who vowed she preferred to die, she would rather endure unending torments than have the members of her proud family disgraced by the knowledge of her shame?

In a sunny corner of the woman's ward at the State Asylum for Insane Criminals at Matteawan, sits this woman whose life surpasses the strangest stories of fiction. For more than forty years she has been in the prisons of this State. It is forty-three years since she was arrested, charged with murder. From that day to this she has been a mystery.

No one who did know her true name will reveal it. Those who knew her personally have kept her secret well. She herself has begged them never to tell it. She has promised her brother, the only member of her family, who knew her awful fate, that she would die without revealing it. In forty years that she has spent in Sing Sing, Auburn and Matteawan, but one person, a woman, has visited her, who knew her true name. Even she did not know the name she bore after her marriage. This woman, on going to see the Veiled Murderess, promised to tell the authorities of the asylum Mrs. Robinson's maiden name.

The moment Mrs. Robinson saw her in the ward she placed her finger on her lip. When the visitor left after two hours she said:

"I cannot tell you who she is. I have promised her that I will not."

It was in 1853, in the Spring, that a man named Lanagan, living in Troy, and a young woman visiting at his house, drank in Lanagan's cottage two glasses of beer at the invitation of a woman calling herself Mrs. Henrietta Robinson. Both died inside of five hours and Mrs. Robinson was at once arrested, at the instigation of Lanagan's wife, charged with administering arsenic in the beer. Arsenic was found under the carpet in the cottage of the eccentric Mrs. Robinson, who had repeatedly threatened to kill somebody or anybody.

A famous politician, of Troy, known throughout the State of New York, who had been living with Mrs. Robinson in this cottage, had not been to see her for a long time. She believed he had deserted her. She claimed him as her husband, and the desertion apparently unseated her reason. She was an extraordinary beautiful and proud woman, with when she found the man neglected her, she began to drink unreasonably and frequent the Lanagan cottage and store across from her house. She had left her husband in England, returning to this side. Disowned by her family, she went to Troy, drawn by memories of the young man she had loved before her marriage.

Mrs. Robinson was promptly arrested for Lanagan's murder. When the trial came she appeared richly dressed but veiled. The judge requested her to remove the veil. She declined. Her counsel could not persuade her to do so, they said. She insisted that rather than have her face exposed to recognition, she would run the risk of all the damage it might do her case. The court rooms were thronged with people curious to see her face. Day after day counsel and judge endeavored to get her to remove the dark blue veil that she wore twisted about her face and even about the back of the head. The extraordinary spectacle was presented of a jury and Judge trying a prisoner whose face they had not seen. Once or twice the judge made a determined order that she must throw back the veil and the prisoner obeyed, but never so that a clear view of her face could be had by even the jury. When the veil was partly removed she drew a rich mantilla about her face, so that it hid part of her features, and used her handkerchief to hide the rest. But unless absolutely compelled, the thick blue veil was never disturbed.

The excitement as to the identity of the prisoner was intense. It was asserted that she was Emma Wood, a daughter of a rich Englishman, of Canada, who had been at the Emma Willard Academy, in Troy. The Willards issued cards saying she was not Emma Wood, but it didn't satisfy the public, nor the newspapers, who vainly struggled to find out who she might be. A Mr. William Wood, of Canada, who doubtless was the "brother Will" to whom Mrs. Robinson refers in the interview I had with her, visited her. She would not see him in the presence of any one, but they were alone two hours. At the end of the time Mr. Wood stated she was not his sister Emma, and tried by letters to prove she did not belong to his family.

Mr. Wood did have one sister named Charlotte. A marriage notice, to which Mrs. Robinson has once made reference as being hers, says that Charlotte Wood was married to the eldest son of William Francis Elliott, Bart., of Stob's Castle, Roxburgshire, Scotland. The bridegroom was named William F. Elliott, and he was an officer of the Ninety-third Highland's.

Mr. Wood showed letters trying to prove Mrs. Robinson was neither of his sisters, but it is generally believed that her name was Charlotte Wood. She has guarded her secret well all these years, and the family, having cast her off, has never interfered with her attempts to do so. Every indication points to the fact that her maiden name was Charlotte Wood.

Mrs. Robinson was undoubtedly insane at the time the murder was committed. But evidence as to insanity was not admitted. Troy was determined to avenge Lanagan's poisoning, and the jury found her guilty. A motion for a new trial was refused, and the sentence that Mrs. Robinson be hanged was sustained. On the night she heard of this she procured candles and illuminated her room in the jail. All night crowds stood outside watching her dancing about the room. Occasionally she appeared at the window, when the crowd cheered and shouted at her.

When sentenced she denounced judge, court and jury, and told the judge that his was the soul God should have mercy upon.

Then came a reaction in public opinion. People began to think she was insane. No one wanted a woman hanged in the State. Even the judge who tried the case went to the Governor to advise commutation of her sentence to imprisonment for life. Singularly enough, Mrs. Robinson bitterly opposed the plan. She begged to be hanged. "I want to die. I am sick of this cold, wicked world, where I cannot trust anybody. I want to die, now. I have promised my brother," she said, "to die without betraying anything, and when I am gone I shall cease to worry and distress them any longer. I might live thirty years in prison, and death seems better. No one will see my face. The Sisters have promised to stay with me and to take me away and cover my face, that no one may see me. Tell the Governor I beg him not to commute my sentence."

In spite of Mrs. Robinson's desires, the Governor did change the sentence to imprisonment for life.

When Mrs. Robinson learned this fact, she tried to burn the jail. She wore the blue veil about her head even in jail, and drew it over her face whenever people tried to see her. She wore it even until the doors of the old Sing Sing Prison for Women had closed behind her.

I saw Mrs. Robinson and spent part of a day with her in the ward at Matteawan. She has been in asylums most of the forty years, as it was soon decided she was insane.

I won her confidence, and she talked very freely to me about herself. She has been subject to hallucinations, and now, with age sliding into a state of dementia, where her insane ideas have disappeared and her attacks of violence are very rare.

As many insane people are nine-tenths normal, so Mrs. Robinson is sane most of the time, and her statements have been proved capable of verification.

She is a fine-looking woman, although nearer eighty than seventy years. She has served a longer time for murder than any other woman in the prisons of this State, and few, if any, men have served longer.

Her skin is fair and fresh. There are no wrinkles or crows' feet about the eyes. Her teeth have fallen out lately, and she deftly manipulates a peculiar arrangement of white agate buttons, which take the place of teeth and help fill out the corners of her mouth, which would sink in otherwise. Her hair is still plentiful, and this woman, who was once so beautiful that she was famous, looks more like a woman of fifty-five than the age she has reached.

I asked her if she had become used to institution life.

"My dear child," she said, "I can tell you, I am not used to it, after even more than forty years. I get used to this sort of thing! Why, I could not. They are good to me, and I suppose I may live another ten years, but never can I get accustomed to it!"

"Do you remember telling a woman that you possibly might live in jail thirty years?"

"Did I? I don't remember about my trial. I still wish to God that my sentence never had been commuted. I wish that I had been hanged. I have been getting better, and now my memory is coming back to me, and the things I did when I was a little child in the nursery at home are all before me, as clear as if I did them yesterday. But of the murder I have no recollection. Now when my memory brings remembrances of my childhood at home, and of my girlhood, and of the man I loved, I suffer. I did not want to live, and here it is over forty years!"

"What have you done all that time?"

"At first I used to read at Sing Sing. I spoiled my eyes reading in the dim light. I played the organ in chapel until my wrist was broken, and I used to train the girls who sang. They said no one humored their voices as I did. It was a grief to me when I could'nt play any longer. Then I knit and embroider and sew. Yes, I must have sewed miles and knit pretty near a mile of edging. During the war I knit stockings for soldiers. Now I am getting old. I have forgotten my French and everything. I have done it purposely. I wanted to hide every trace of my former existence. I even use illiterate language. Don't you notice it? I used that so people would not know me, and think I was educated. I would not have my family know of my whereabouts for anything. Why, I have a son in the English Parliament. He was living and had succeeded to his titles the last I knew, and not for worlds would I let such disgrace come upon him.

"You know," and Mrs. Robinson's voice sank almost to a whisper, so that I had to lean forward to catch what she said; "he does not know I live. He believes his mother dead. When my brother Will came to see me in the jail at Troy, I begged him not to tell the rest of the family of my shame. He alone knew of it, and I promised him that I would never reveal my identity. Many of the family are dead, I know, for I was the youngest girl, the baby of the family."

"Then they must have called you some pet name. What was it?"

As quick as a flash, Mrs. Robinson drew back and laughed at me.

"Oh, you don't catch me napping. You'd like to, my dear, but I shant tell you my name."

"Tell me about your father, then."

"My papa was a gentleman. He was brave and such a fine man. You see he was English. I was born in England. My pap was the third son, and, of course, he had to go into the church or else serve his country. He became a middy in the navy."

"My husband was the son of a man of title—a younger son—but he succeeded in time to the title after I came back to this country. Our son now has the title and property. One of my sisters married the son of a peer and another married a peer. When I was in jail at Troy my brother came to see me with my grandmamma's lawyer. I fixed my property so that it is all right, and if ever I should be so fortunate as to be released I should be able to go to my grandmamma's old house and live comfortably. There is also some bank stock that is being cared for in the same way. When I was in Sing Sing and after my removal to Auburn I had several thousand dollars. It happened in this way. When I went to Sing Sing there was a priest there who recognized me. He was then in the English church in orders. When he saw me he said: 'My child, can I believe my eyes!' I admitted that he knew me, but begged him for my family's sake not to tell any one who I was. He wrote to my brother, Will, who sent Father McClellan checks for me which were always in New York. Then Father McClellan died, and again no one knew me. At Auburn there was some change, and I knew it was intended to take my money from me. I sent for a lawyer and requested him to send back to my brother the remainder of the checks I had as I could not cash them and had no intention of taking any one into my confidence. I hoped as the years went by every trace of me would be lost. I told my brother then that I was not likely to live long. I was sick, and he must not write to me or communicate with me. I have never heard since from my people."

"After a time," she went on, "my father succeeded to thte family title, and returned to England to live. That was after they had turned me from the doors. Both my mother and father were dead when my trouble occurred in Troy. My mamma had nine living children. I was the baby of the girls.

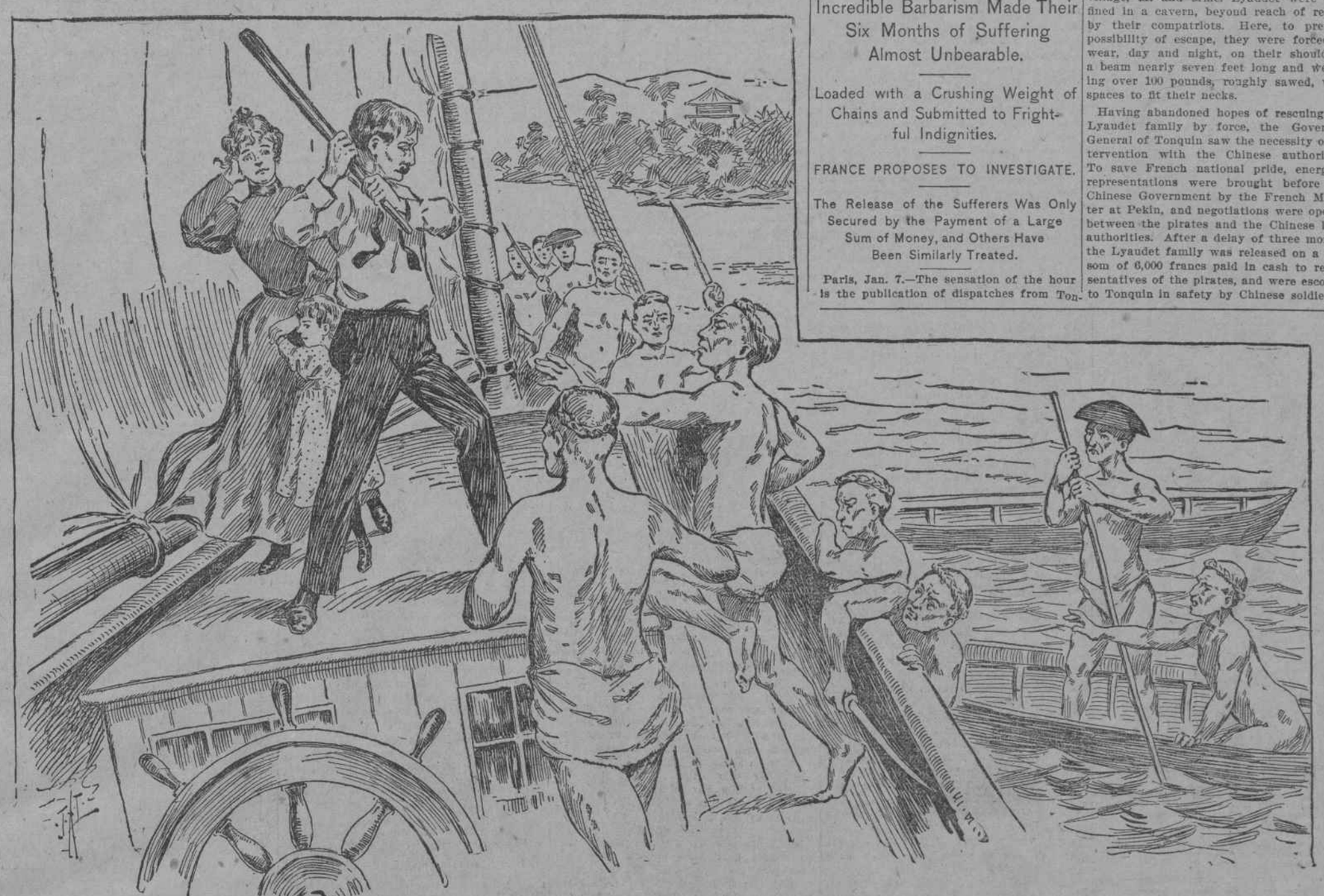
"And you were always called?"——

"Lottie."

To see Mrs. Robinson's amazement when told of things that had happened in the world and of the novelties of the age was an entertainment. When told that there were buildings twenty-two stories high, she inquired if they were not unhealthy.

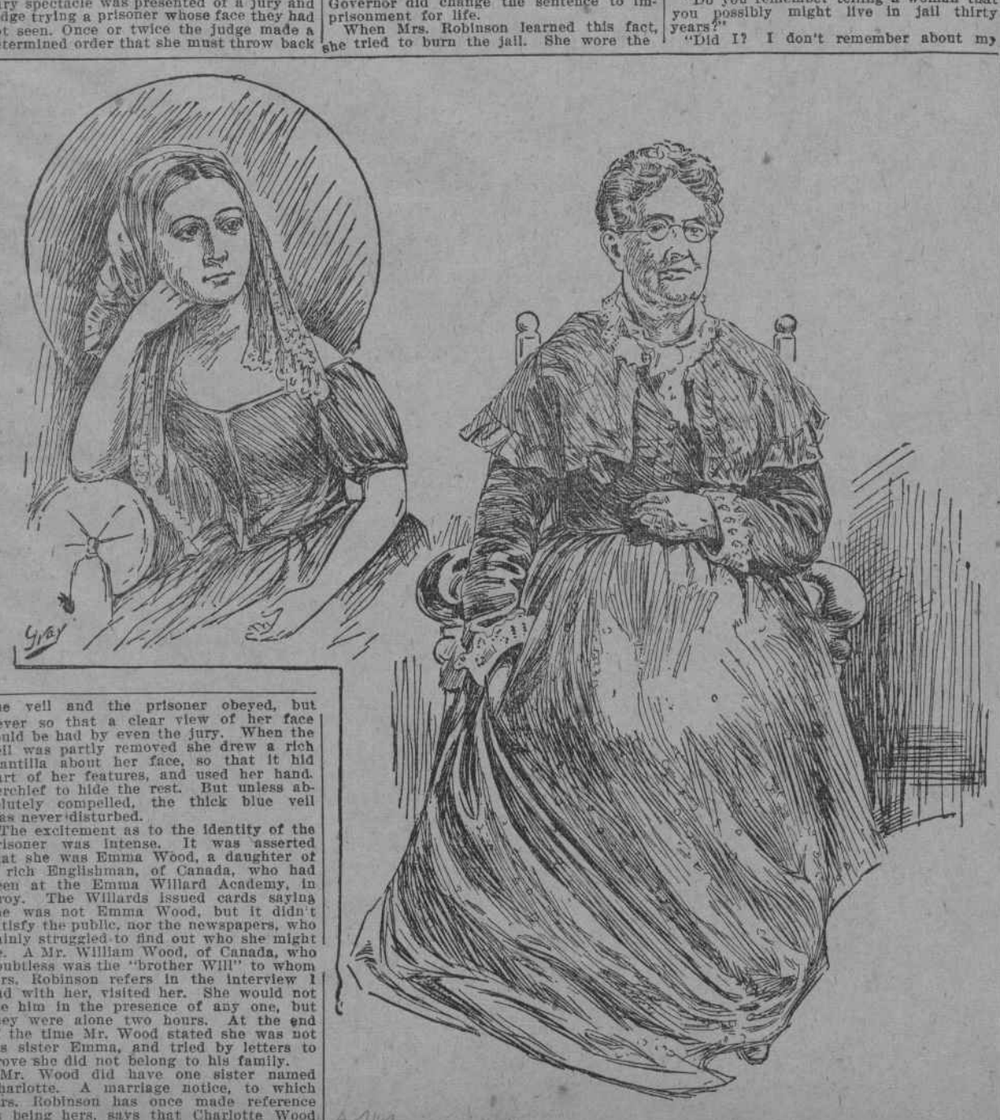
She had heard of trains that ran in the air, and she knew that people ate in the steam cars and slept there. She had travelled, of course, from Auburn to Matteawan, when the latter asylum was opened. Of the great naval fleets of the world she heard with amazement and interest, because of her ancestors' connection with the British navy.

Then the dinner bell rang, and Mrs. Robinson said she must go. As she rose, she reeled and fell.



"The Schooner Was Boarded by Screaming, Naked Coolies."

(Sketched from descriptions written by M. Lyaudet.)



The Veiled Murderess of Albany as She Looks Now, After 43 Years of Imprisonment, and as She Looked at the Time of Her Trial.

(Drawn from a photograph taken last Thursday and from a daguerreotype by a Journal staff artist.)

Chinese Monsters.

They Kidnapped a French Family and Tortured Them.

Incredible Barbarism Made Their Six Months of Suffering Almost Unbearable.

Loaded with a Crushing Weight of Chains and Submitted to Frightful Indignities.

FRANCE PROPOSES TO INVESTIGATE.

The Release of the Sufferers Was Only Secured by the Payment of a Large Sum of Money, and Others Have Been Similarly Treated.

Paris, Jan. 7.—The sensation of the hour is the publication of dispatches from Tonquin describing an outrage on a family of French subjects by Indo-Chinese pirates that outdoes the most lurid annals of capture of Christians by barbarians of the middle ages. It also seems from the account that such cases are common, and that the person of a European in Indo-China is unsafe.

According to the dispatch, M. Lyaudet, president of the Kebao Coal Company, together with his wife and their five-year-old daughter, Sarah, were passengers on a small schooner bound from Tonquin to Port Wallut, where the coal mines are situated, on the 24th of April last.

"At 10 o'clock in the evening," writes M. Lyaudet, "the schooner was surrounded by a flotilla of small boats from the shore and boarded by a dozen screaming, naked coolies, armed with long knives and spears.

"We were dragged roughly from our cabin, our hands were tied behind and we were thrust into the bottom of one of their largest boats, where we were warned on pain of instant death to make no outcry. In this position, with our captors sitting heavily upon us, crushing us almost to insensibility, we were paddled along the coast into an inlet many miles from the point where we were captured. Mme. Lyaudet and my little girl suffered greatly from cold and wet, for their clothing was almost completely torn from their backs in the struggle that ensued when our boat was attacked. My wife, especially, who was left but one garment, was subjected to jibes and insults that even a slight acquaintance with the language made it impossible for her not to understand."

"At one time, in rounding a point, we passed within a short distance of a French coasting steamer from Mon Cay, but were unable to cry for assistance.

"On the following morning, at daybreak, we were disembarked on an island near Pan-Ai, where we were loaded with weights and chains and tied to trees. Here we remained for nearly three months, until the middle of July. The most distressing feature of our captivity for my wife was that at no time were we free from ridicule and observation on the part of our captors. Our food consisted of a few grains of corn each day, boiled without salt, small shellfish and rats, which we were obliged to cook for ourselves."

From this point M. Lyaudet begins a story of hardships and mortification that rivals the annals of the middle ages. He recounts his sufferings at length in a current number of the Courier d' Haipong, which is forwarded from Tonquin. It appears that he and his wife were constantly chained so that they could neither move nor sleep with comfort.

He was forced to address constant letters to M. Rousseau, Governor-General of Tonquin, describing his situation and begging for ransom at a price of one million francs. These letters were forwarded in a roundabout way, and eventually reached the French authorities at Tonquin.

Governor Rousseau was not only unable to raise such a sum, even for the ransom of a French subject, but was unwilling to encourage piratical operations on so large a plan. He therefore dispatched a column of French troops of the Legion d'etranger, under General Sau, to scout the country about Pan-Ai in hopes of discovering the pirates and their captives.

From the 8th to the 31st of July General Sau campaigned through out the territory lying along the coast within the French possession. Everywhere he received misleading information from peasants and fishermen, who were hostile to the French "foreign devils." The relief expedition was abandoned on the 31st and returned to Tonquin.

In the meantime M. and Mme. Lyaudet had ben taken by forced marches to the interior on Chinese soil. While the parents, lame and without shoes, were forced to accompany their captors over the rough, pathless country, the little girl, Sarah, who had won the confidence of the rough outlaws, was allowed to run free at their sides, and encouraged them throughout their sufferings.

At nightfall they were denied rest, and were tied so tightly to trees and logs that they started again on their journey almost unable to move from stiffness and fatigue. Having arrived on the outskirts of a small village, M. and Mme. Lyaudet were confined in a cavern, beyond reach of rescue by their compatriots. Here, to prevent possibility of escape, they were forced to wear, day and night, on their shoulders, a beam nearly seven feet long and weighing over 100 pounds, roughly sawed, with spaces to fit their necks.

Having abandoned hopes of rescuing the Lyaudet family by force, the Governor-General of Tonquin saw the necessity of intervention with the Chinese authorities. To save French national pride, energetic representations were brought before the Chinese Government by the French Minister at Pekin, and negotiations were opened between the pirates and the Chinese local authorities. After a delay of three months the Lyaudet family was released on a ransom of 6,000 francs paid in cash to representatives of the pirates, and were escorted to Tonquin in safety by Chinese soldiers.

The case has brought excitement to a head among European inhabitants of Indo-China, being one only of a number that have attracted attention in the colony during the past year. In February last M. Chaillet and his wife were seized under similar circumstances, and M. Chaillet was put to death by torture on the non-payment of a ransom. Mme. Chaillet escaped by an accident, having undergone severe sufferings. Success has emboldened outlaws, and the waters about Tonquin are now infested with pirates ready to seize on French commercial and colonial agents, whose duties carry them to remote points, beyond reach of immediate assistance.

The local Chinese authorities assume to be unable to prevent outrages of the kind, and the French troops in the neighborhood, owing to unfriendliness of the natives, are unable to run down the evildoers and protect their compatriots.

It is rumored that M. Delahaye will interpollate the Government, taking a strong stand, and demanding that the Chinese authorities be required to suppress, with a strong hand, such outrages in the future.

Claim to Fame.

He—Do you think my poems will live after me?

She—I guess so; you know it is the bad that men do which lives after them.—Yonkers Statesman.

A Bride for $600.

This Man Wanted to Substitute Filthy Lucre for Love.

Would Have Purchased and Married Her, but for Legal Obstacles.

CAME TO NEW YORK, BUT IN VAIN.

He Has Gone Back to His Cobbler's Bench and the Little Girl to School and Her Dolls.

Six hundred dollars is the value Joseph Piro, of Goshen, N. Y., is said to place upon a wife. This is the amount he is alleged to have offered the father of thirteen-year-old Ella Collander, a pretty Italian child, whose budding charms inspired the tender passion in the Piro breast. The offer was agreeable to both father and daughter, and but for an unfortunate obstacle—the law—there would have been a marriage that was clearly not made in heaven.

Piro is a thrifty shoemaker and fruit dealer at Goshen, whose appearance is not of the sort that charms. Up to a few weeks ago he lived in the rooms back of his shop. At that time he found it necessary to employ some one to help him, and secured the services of Michael Collander, who, with his wife and three children, came to live with Piro.

Collander's eldest child was Ella, thirteen years old, mature for her age and with a slight claim to comeliness. Piro adored her at sight, and in a few days surprised her father by agreeing to exchange $600 for Ella. Cupid and Mammon made a sufficiently strong combination to overcome Collander's scruples, if he ever possessed any. The child was quite willing to be sacrificed to love and avarice. What the mother thought no one seems to know or care.

The bargain was kept secret. Little Ella, still in the primary grade at the public schools, went on with her studies, and the patter of Piro's hammer on the hobnailed shoes of his countrymen was as firm and regular as if his heart was not swelling with the emotions of a bridegroom to be. People noticed that Mrs. Collander seemed borne down with some sorrow, but it did not bother Collander pere, and so was nothing at all to be considered.

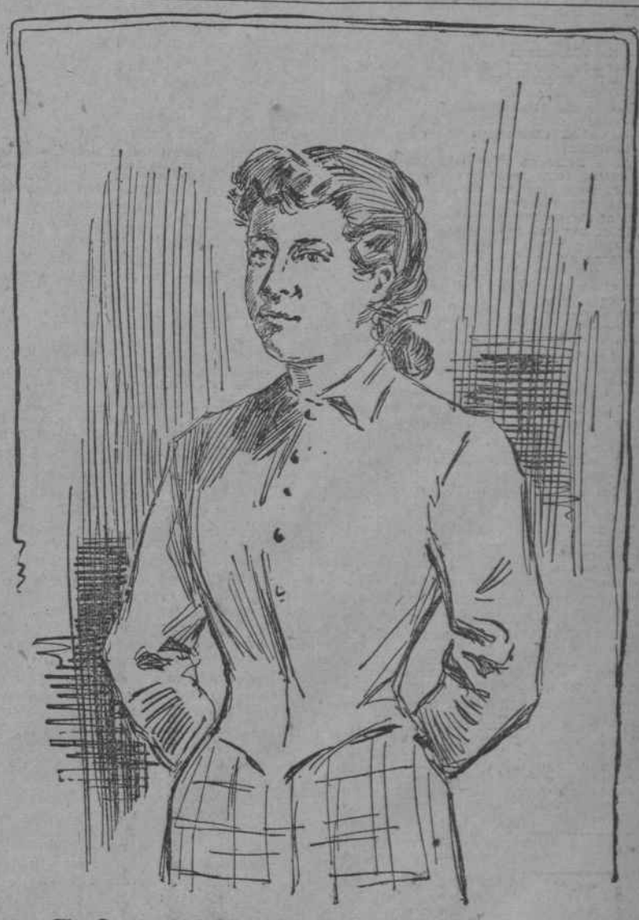
One day about three weeks ago Piro and his child fiancee appeared before an astonished minister and asked to be married. A hasty and rather indignant refusal followed. Another divine was visited with the same result. All efforts of the couple to become man and wife resulted in that failure.

Then an idea broke into the fortress of Piro's mind. In the great city of New York there surely would be no trouble, even if a big Italian man did want to marry a pretty child. So the Piro business was given a vacation, and Sunday, January 5, Piro, Ella and Collander boarded a train for this city. The course of true love, even though it be one-sided, does not, as truthful tradition relates, run smooth, and the members of the bridal party were tremendously su[illegible] to find, when they reached New York, that the pol[illegible] had arranged for an ante-nuptial reception, [illegible] efforts being assisted by Mr. Elbridge T. Gerry. The reception was a marked success when viewed from the standpoint of the police, although the visitors looked upon the situation differently. The result of it all was that Ella returned to Goshen from her visit here still a little girl, with every right to play with her dolls and bid the cares of matrimony go hence.

The failure of this attempt to marry has apparently resulted in a truce. Piro has perhaps, thought of a more lucrative way in which to invest his $600 than in a child-wife. Once more he is hammering hobnailed shoes and scowling at the world. He says any woman who wishes to marry him must now pay him for the privilege, and, anyway, he wants a "big" woman for a wife. If Cupid really did, in a spirit of sarcasm, send a stray shaft into the heart of this queer-looking shoemaker the wound must have been slight, and to all appearances has healed, for Piro bears no resemblance whatever to the owner of blighted affections. He evidently regards the whole affair as a proposed property purchase that fell through.

Little Ella, who had such a narrow escape from matrimony—or slavery, whatever one chooses to consider it—smiles cunningly when questioned about the affair, and says she doesn't want to be any one's wife; that she must go to school at least three years more; that she knows nothing of any bargain concerning her. And as for marrying Piro, sapristi! That man? Never! Should she ever marry it would certainly be some one who is at least good looking.

All sorts of gossip about Piro and Ella is flouting about Goshen, and Piro's life is not of unalloyed bliss because of the ridicule he is forced to face. One story has it that the wedding of the child and the shoemaker has really taken place, and that Ella has entered upon the three years' residence with her parents that an old Italian custom requires. Collander says



The Pretty Girl Who Was Worth $600—Ella Collander.

(Drawn from a photograph made for the Journal).